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PRESS RELEASE

UNFCCC Executive Secretary calls on governments to accelerate search for common ground at Tianjin climate meeting

(Tianjin, 4 October 2010). UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres called on governments meeting in Tianjin, China, to accelerate their search for common ground to achieve strong action on climate change. With less than two months to go before the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, Mexico, she said that a concrete outcome in December was urgently needed to restore faith in the ability of Parties to take the negotiations forward.

"Governments have restored their own trust in the process, but they must ensure that the rest of the world believes in a future of ever increasing government commitment to combat climate change," she said. "Governments need to agree on what is doable in Cancún, and how it will be achievable in a politically balanced manner," she added.

Ms. Figueres said there is a growing convergence in the negotiations that Cancún could deliver a balanced package of decisions that define the pillars of action to address climate change.

Such a politically balanced package of decisions could include a new global framework to help countries adapt to the already inevitable changes to the climate system, the launch of a new mechanism to drive faster deployment of technology to developing nations, a decision to establish a new fund to oversee the long-term money raised for the specific climate needs of developing nations, and a decision on early and large-scale action to protect forests and the livelihoods of those who live in them.

"The agreements that can be reached in Cancun may not be exhaustive in their details, but as a balanced package they must be comprehensive in their scope and they can deliver strong results in the short term as well as set the stage for long term commitments to address climate change in an effective and fair manner," Ms. Figueres said.

Ms. Figueres acknowledged there were areas of political disagreements, mainly over how and when to agree on a fair share of responsibilities of present and future action on climate change, but said they were not insurmountable.

"Governments seem ready to discuss difficult issues. Now they must bridge differences in order to reach a tangible outcome in Cancún," she said.

For example, governments can formalise the many pledges and promises they have made to cut and limit emissions, along with providing clarity on the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol.



During the next six days of the Tianjin climate meeting, government delegates will discuss negotiating text under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA). This negotiating group, comprising all 194 Parties to the UNFCCC, is tasked to deliver a long-term global approach to the climate challenge.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) is meeting in parallel to discuss the emissions reduction commitments for the 37 industrialised countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol for the period beyond 2012.

Ms. Figueres said that this year's floods in Pakistan, fires in Russia and mudslides in China had been a wake up call to the dangers of extreme climate.

"The bottom line is that it is in no one's interest to delay action. Quite on the contrary, it is in everyone's ultimate interest to accelerate action in order to minimize negative impacts on all," she said.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Tianjin is being attended by around three thousand participants from more than 176 countries, including government delegates, representatives from business and industry, environmental organisations and research institutions. The UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, Mexico, will take place 29 November to 10 December.

Opening statement by the UNFCCC Executive Secretary at the Tianjin conference:
http://unfccc.int/files/press/statements/application/pdf/2101004_cf_opening_statement.pdf

About the UNFCCC

With 194 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 191 of the UNFCCC Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

UNFCCC press office: <http://unfccc.int/press/items/2794.php>